



U.S. Army photo

Managing risk begins long before the unit deploys on its assigned mission. Determining the level of risk involved in convoy movements like the one above is crucial to a safe and successful mission.

By Sgt. Jimmy Norris

Whether a unit is planning a four-day weekend or a deployment into a far away desert, there is risk in almost everything, and that risk needs to be assessed. The unit leadership must identify the hazards threatening both the Soldiers and the mission, and ways to mitigate those hazards need to be found. Unfortunately, said Chief Warrant Officer Anthony Kurtz, team chief of the U.S. Army Safety Center's Mobile Training Team, the mistake many units make is stopping their risk management process after they complete the risk assessment.

"Conducting a risk assessment only covers the first two steps of the risk management process," he said. "This is where units get in trouble. They stop there because they think they've accomplished risk management."

The risk management process, he said, is a five-step continuous process.

The first step is to identify the hazards of a mission. Hazards, Kurtz said, are any real or potential conditions that can cause injury, illness, mission degradation, damage to or loss of equipment or property.

Kurtz said there are a number of ways to identify hazards. One is through experience. If a leader has been involved in a similar mission, he should have a pretty good idea of which hazards to expect.

Using their experience to help identify hazards is one of the ways NCOs can play a big role in the risk management process, said Master Sgt. Terry Costlow, an instructor from the U.S. Army Safety Center's Mobile Training Team.

"NCOs have been out in the field. They've probably done the missions hundreds of times and probably have 10 times the experience their commander does," he said. "They can help by informing him of past hazards and recommending controls they've seen used effectively."

Another way to identify potential hazards is through historical data. At the end of every mission or exercise, Kurtz said, there should be an after action review (AAR). The AAR provides a record of hazards that occurred the last time the unit conducted a similar mission. Another way to identify hazards is through intuitive analysis, what Kurtz described as a "gut feeling."

The best way, he said, is to use the hazard identification tools that can be found on the U.S. Army Safety Center Web site located at <http://safety.army.mil>.

Once the hazards have been identified, the second step in the Risk Management Process is to assess the hazards – to determine the possible impact of each hazard based on the hazard's probability and potential severity.

The U.S. Army Safety Center's Web site provides a risk assessment matrix that helps categorize hazards according to severity and probability. (See graphic on page 18.)

To illustrate how these categories might fit into an assessment, Kurtz used a ruck march on desert terrain as an example. The probability of a heat injury in this situation is likely, but since most injuries result only in a Soldier needing an intravenous rehydration treatment, the severity of the hazard is negligible, Kurtz explained. On the Risk Assessment Matrix, a probability of likely and a severity of negligible combine to form a low-risk situation.

But each mission is different, Kurtz said. For example, Soldiers who have had previous heat injuries have an increased probability of a new heat injury.

“You have to ask ‘How will this affect the Soldiers?’ because if it affects the Soldiers, chances are, it will affect the mission,” Kurtz said.

“I would rather rate a hazard higher and have more controls in place than risk having a Soldier injured,” added Costlow.

The third step in the risk management process is to develop controls that reduce either the probability or the severity of a hazard.

Going back to his example of a ruck march in the desert, Kurtz said, an example of a control measure might be to schedule the march for the early morning when temperatures are cooler than they would be later in the day. By moving the activity to a cooler part of the day, the likelihood of a heat injury is reduced.

At the NCO-level, Kurtz said, it’s important to be aggressive in making the chain of command aware of potential risks, Soldiers’ prior heat injuries, for example, so they can make informed decisions when putting controls in place.

RISK ASSESSMENT MATRIX

E - EXTREMELY HIGH RISK
H - HIGH RISK
M - MODERATE RISK
L - LOW RISK

		PROBABILITY				
		FREQUENT	LIKELY	OCCASIONAL	SELDOM	UNLIKELY
SEVERITY	CATASTROPHIC	E	E	H	H	M
	CRITICAL	E	H	H	M	L
	MARGINAL	H	M	M	L	L
	NEGLECTIBLE	M	L	L	L	L

Probability

Unlikely – Will probably not occur

Seldom – Unlikely, but could occur at some time

Occasional – Occurs sporadically

Likely – Occurs several times

Frequent – Occurs often

Severity

Negligible – Requiring first aid or causing minor system impairment

Marginal – Causing minor injury or property damage

Critical – Causing permanent partial disability or major property damage

Catastrophic – Resulting in death, permanent total disability, system loss or major property damage



Photo by Spc. Sean Kimmons, 25th Infantry Division, PAO

Marshalling vehicles to the ready line involves little risk, but if the potential risks are not considered, even this operation can have a negative outcome. According to the Army Safety Center, for every reported accident there are approximately 600 nonreported near misses.

The fourth step in the risk management process is to implement controls.

“NCOs and the Army as a whole are real good at identifying and assessing hazards and coming up with controls,” said Costlow. “Implementing is where we start falling off. We talk about controls, but we don’t put them in place.”

Implementing controls is done through regulations, policy letters, standard operating procedures, orders, briefings, back-briefs, training and rehearsals.

Kurtz said NCOs play a key role in this step by training and briefing their Soldiers after the chain of command has put a policy in place.

“NCOs shouldn’t think they don’t have a role in this process because they do,” Kurtz said. “They’re the first-line supervisors. They’re the ones with their boots in the mud.”

The fifth step in the process is to supervise and evaluate. Supervising and evaluating means enforcing implemented controls, while evaluating, adjusting and updating when necessary. According to Costlow, this is another part of the risk management process in which NCOs play a key role.

“NCOs are the enforcers of the standard. The squad leaders, platoon sergeants and team leaders are the ones out working with the Soldiers,” he said. “The commander can’t always be there and the Soldiers are more apt to talk to their NCOs than to their commanders about any new hazards that might come up or which controls aren’t working.”

Supervising and evaluating, Kurtz said, is one of the most often neglected steps in the process.

“This is the step people forget the most,” he said. “Supervising and evaluating is a continuous process because as soon as the mission starts the situation has changed. New hazards arise, the weather changes or the controls you implemented don’t work.”

When the mission is over, Kurtz said, units should always conduct an AAR. This will provide the historical data for future missions and help reduce risks.

“The bottom line is you want to use this process to protect the assets and protect the mission,” Kurtz said.

For more information on the risk management process, go to the Army Safety Center Web site at <http://safety.army.mil>.



U.S. Army photo

Underestimating the risks involved in a rappelling exercise can be deadly.

Your faith and the mission: Finding the delicate balance

By Sgt. Chad T. Jones

Today's diverse Army includes Soldiers from every religion. Some may attend religious services on Sundays, others on Saturdays and some may attend prayers everyday. While the Army has always been on the cutting edge of cultural and religious awareness, many NCOs may still be in the dark about the specific religious practices and needed accommodations for some of their Soldiers. In those

cases, the Soldier and NCO must work together to achieve an understanding that enables the Soldiers to accomplish their missions and still observe their religious practices, explained Chaplain's Assistant, Sergeant Maj. Marion Lemon of the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas.

Religious accommodation is "a part of a Soldier's readiness and well being," said the U.S. Army Pacific Command's Islamic chaplain, Chaplain (Cpt.) Abdullah A. Hulwe. He recommended that NCOs practice a variation of a familiar phrase when dealing with Soldiers' religions. "NCOs need to know, be and do," Hulwe said, explaining that knowledge is vital when dealing with Soldiers' religious accommodations.

Understanding Soldiers' religious needs helps foster a strong working relationship between the NCO and the Soldier, according to Lemon.

"Allowing Soldiers to practice their religions has an impact on the mission and morale," Lemon explained. "If Soldiers see their NCO is allowing them the opportunity to worship, they will be more than happy to accomplish the mission."

The right for individuals to practice their religious beliefs is covered under the U.S. Constitution, Title X, as well as Army Regulation 600-20, *Army Command Policy*; Army Field Manual 1-05, *Religious Support*; and DA Pamphlet 600-75, *Accommodating Religious Practices*.

"The Army places a high value on the rights of its Soldiers to observe tenets of their respective religious faiths. The Army will approve requests for accommodation of religious practices unless accommodation will have an adverse impact on unit readiness,

individual readiness, unit cohesion, morale, discipline, safety, and/or health," said Chaplain (Maj.) Charles E. Reynolds, a World Religions instructor at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, Fort Bragg, N.C., quoting from AR 600-20, Chapter 5-6.

Reynolds emphasized that Soldiers have an obligation to communicate with their chain of command concerning their religious practices.

"The most important [thing] is for Soldiers to simply make their commanders aware of what those needs are," Reynolds explained.

Soldiers must realize their right to religious accommodations does not supercede the Army's need to accomplish the mission, Lemon said. On the other hand, commanders should support Soldiers who make legitimate requests to attend services at an alternate time that meets the mission and Soldier's needs.

For example, Christian Soldiers in a combat zone might not be able to attend traditional church services on Sundays.



Photos courtesy of Nella Hobson, U.S. Army Chaplain Center and School

A chaplain's assistant breaks down an altar in a containerized chapel, after a Catholic worship service in the field.

So, the command may arrange a more suitable time for services. "Combat chaplains often use the phrase, 'Every day is Sunday,'" said Reynolds. "That means services are held on whatever day the chaplain can get to the unit to perform services."

But some accommodations require advanced planning on the leader's part. Leader's books are a valuable tool NCOs can use to remind themselves of these accommodations. The Leader's book should include information on the Soldier's faith such as dates of religious holy days and dietary requirements, Lemon said.

There are now [Meals, Ready to Eat] that accommodate many different religions' dietary needs," explained the Training and Doctrine Command's Chaplain (Col.) Lilton J. Marks.

Specialty meals should be available to Soldiers who have special dietary needs. All it takes is a little advanced planning, said Marks. Once NCOs identify their Soldiers' specific dietary requirements, NCOs can go to their Supply NCO to request specialty meals.

In other cases, NCOs and Soldiers may need to work together to allow Soldiers time to participate in religious holidays. For example, the Jewish High Holy Days are in the fall and do not coincide with regularly scheduled days off. Other religious holidays are linked to the changes of the season, not a regularly scheduled date, Marks and Reynolds explained.

Another example is the Islamic month of Ramadan when Muslim Soldiers are required to refrain from food, water and other physical pleasures from sunrise to sunset. Practicing Muslims may be excused from physical fitness training, in accordance with the Department of the Army's Chief of Chaplains' and the local commander's guidelines.

Soldiers and NCOs who have questions or require clarification concerning a Soldier's religious practices

may speak with a chaplain or chaplain's assistant. But Marks reminds Soldiers that chaplains only advise leaders; it's ultimately a commander's decision when it comes to setting priorities.

"Soldiers and leaders need to know that the Army policy strongly supports religious accommodations," said Reynolds, who recalled something a retired brigade command sergeant major once told him concerning how far Army leadership will go to help Soldiers meet their religious needs.

"He said, 'Commanders and noncommissioned officers in leadership positions will bend over backwards to accommodate any religious practice, as long as it does not interfere with a Soldier's duty or the appearance of the Soldier's uniform.'"

Leaders must take time to understand their Soldiers' religious needs, and Soldiers must take time to know the Army guidance, Marks explained. Together they can broker a plan that ensures mission success and still provides for the Soldiers' spiritual needs.



Photos courtesy of Nella Hobson, U.S. Army Chaplain Center and School

Left: Chaplain offers communion for Soldiers. Center: Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Dennis Madtes provides comfort for Soldiers. Right: A Muslim chaplain prays during a training exercise.